

Q-Star Technology NEWS

News and information about the use of FlashCAM vandalism deterrent systems

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Graffiti: The Problem

It is estimated that nationwide, the American public spends nearly \$12 billion each year to fight graffiti.

Children and young adults become involved in graffiti vandalism for a number of reasons: gang association, peer recognition, lack of recreational alternatives, the element of danger, and lack of appropriate parental supervision and discipline.

The Solution

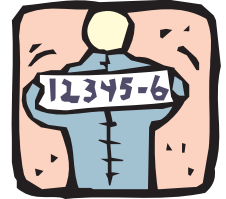
Cities with proactive anti-graffiti programs use a multi-level approach:

- Pass tougher anti-graffiti laws; adopt a “no graffiti will be tolerated” mindset
- Recruit a group of volunteers to paint over graffiti
- Establish consistent consequences for graffiti offenders
- Publicize consequences of graffiti vandalism
- Provide color-matched paint and supplies for the volunteers.
- Paint over the graffiti as soon as possible because it discourages more tagging.
- Set up a “Graffiti Hot Line” so residents can easily report graffiti
- Install FlashCAM-880 digital camera deterrent systems in high profile graffiti locations. Once those locations are graffiti-free, move the systems to the next problem areas.

For more information and ideas on graffiti prevention programs go to www.graffitihurts.org ▲

100% Conviction Rate of Taggers

An undercover detective with the Redondo Beach PD makes good use of two FlashCAM-880's to catch graffiti taggers in this California beach city. His conviction rate to-date is 100%. Graffiti here is a combination of ordinary taggers and gang taggers. The detective says the FlashCAM is also a good tool to enhance the relationship between the police department and the community. Recently a small produce shop kept getting their truck tagged as it sat in the lot next to the business over night. The owner had spent over \$3,000 painting over the graffiti and finally gave up. The detective had city workers clean the graffiti from the truck, then set up a FlashCAM-880. The truck has remained graffiti-free even though the camera system was relocated after two weeks.



The high resolution pictures from the FlashCAM-880 are used to ID suspects who are then classified into categories such as: city resident, on probation, gang member, etc. Then it is time for a home visit. Many parents are either surprised or defensive. Some will allow a search of the juvenile's room. On occasion the kid will say, “Give it up Mom, that's me in the picture.” The state of California has two laws on the books that really help in the prosecution of graffiti offenders. First was the change in the amount of damage that is classified as felony from \$5,000 to \$400. Most multiple tags can reach the \$400 level due to the cost of clean up. The second important law is the “Gang Enhancement” law, 186.22.(A) which adds two years for any crime that enhances the gang. For example, gang tagging or marking a territory falls under this law, so a six months sentence would automatically become two years and six months.

Another important component of the Redondo Beach program is a close relationship with people in the Street Department who provide FlashCAM installation and moving support. This is an informal relationship and it is a “let's get things done” attitude that makes things run smoothly. The FlashCAM-880's, good police work and some supportive laws help Redondo Beach in the ongoing battle to reduce graffiti. ▲



New Program to Battle Illegal Tire Dumping

The California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB) is implementing an innovative program to help cities and counties in California to reduce illegal tire dumping. Californians generate about 33 million waste tires each year. If stacked end to end these tires would reach half-way around the world. A tire takes about 80 years to deteriorate in a landfill so it is really important that tire disposal is handled properly.

The CIWMB has \$6,000,000 available to local enforcement agencies through a grant program to provide funds to assist with the enforcement and surveillance of illegal dumping areas. Through this grant program the CIWMB in conjunction with the Air Resources Board, provides surveillance equipment (a FlashCAM-880 or other type of equipment) for loan and will assist with the purchase of camera systems. The CIWMB provides technical support to a community to help reduce illegal tire dumping. It is funded by the fee consumers pay to assure the old tire is disposed of legally. For more information about this program go to www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Tires. ▲

FlashCAM-880s used to stop Graffiti and Illegal Trash Dumping

Terry Buss works in the Code Enforcement unit for the City of Bakersfield, CA. They recently upgraded six FlashCAM-770 systems to FlashCAM-880s. Terry reports "The wireless download makes the systems easy to use" (they do not have to use a lift truck to retrieve pictures). Once a week they check and download pictures from each camera. In high traffic areas they might have up to 400 pictures.

Systems used to deter trash dumping are installed at vacant residential lots and in some cases, behind commercial buildings. Other FlashCAMs are installed at schools to stop graffiti. In that case they give the pictures to the school police who identify and intervene with the student in an effort to divert them from further bad behavior and joining gangs. ▲



Gas Thieves Apprehended

This gas is for school buses only...leave now. Two former Los Angeles Unified School district bus drivers decided to fill up their private

vehicles with gas and had their picture taken with a FlashCAM system. They decided not to contest the evidence when they saw the high resolution pictures. The culprits were given a choice of 30 days in jail or 30 days of Caltrans work plus three years of probation. The gas pump area was lit all night long, so it was possible to disconnect the flash unit on the FlashCAM system. With the flash disconnected and with no voice recording the system works fine as a covert camera system. The pictures showed both individuals and the license number on their vehicles. ▲

Whittier PD has a Winning Strategy

Officer Craig Hentcy, Whittier, CA Police Dept. rotates locations of a FlashCAM-880 to stop graffiti. The unit has been used in an alley, overlooking a billboard, a water reservoir, and in all instances the graffiti stopped. When the FlashCAM is moved to a new location, the original location remains graffiti-free for some time.

Officer Hentcy said, "The quality of the photos from the FlashCAM-880 is outstanding. We're also getting clear pictures of license plate numbers." When he ran one of the license numbers it was revealed that it belonged to a person on probation. Which begs the question, "What was he doing in the alley known for high drug traffic?" ▲

Excellence! City of Pittsburg Wins Award

Congratulations to the city of Pittsburg, CA for winning The National League of Cities Municipal Excellence award for their illegal trash dumping program. Pittsburg was one of 3 California cities that won an award. Q-Star is proud to be a partner in Pittsburg's successful, and now nationally recognized, program.

Pittsburg's anti-dumping program involves signage, school programs, Code Enforcement, and the use of FlashCAMs. For example, in one trouble spot--a remote cul de sac--trucks and dumpsters were required weekly to clean up illegally dumped items. A FlashCAM was installed and the dumping stopped. The city placed signage around town with a number to call to report illegal dumping. This effort is to complement a brochure that describes the problem, the cost of clean up, and how residents can be part of the solution by reporting when they witness dumping.

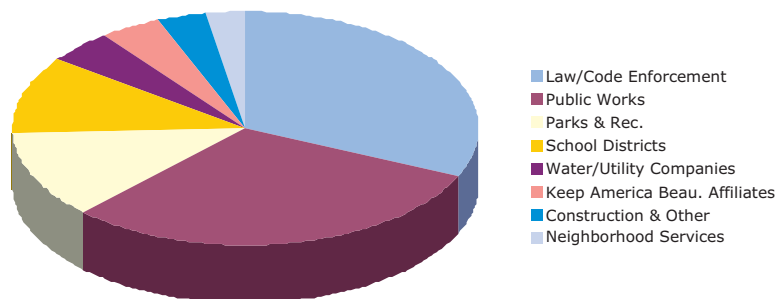
The city also promoted a poster and video contest in the local schools. The "Don't Trash Pittsburg! Pick up litter ~ Recycle bottles, glass, cans & paper" contest winners had their artwork displayed as a poster at local businesses and schools. The video public service announcement was aired on local TV channels. The city believes that changing children's behavior now will help eliminate the problem when they become adults.

As a result of this comprehensive program, the city has seen a major decline in illegal dumping, graffiti, litter and blight in the community. One measure of success: the city can reassign two employees to other tasks. For more information about Pittsburg's program, contact Laura Wright at lwright@ci.pittsburg.ca.us. ▲

FlashCAM Customers. Who Are They?

You are in good company when you purchase FlashCAM systems. Customers are jumping on the FlashCAM-880 bandwagon citing ease of use with the Wireless Download feature and high resolution digital pictures. FlashCAMs are installed in all areas of the U.S.

FlashCAM Users by Market Segment



Each customer's situation is unique, yet they face some typical challenges: graffiti, vandalism, illegal trash/hazardous waste dumping, copper/materials/equipment theft, drug dealing, and other anti-social behaviors. More and more cities, counties and business entities are taking a pro-active stance to address these issues. FlashCAMs can help. ▲